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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2906  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 5255  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2989  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2854  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000690

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: DEPORTED TURKMEN  
"GASTARBEITERS" LINE UP AT THE ASHGABAT AIRPORT

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: The number of illegal Turkmen migrant workers deported from Turkey due to the violations of the visa regime has reportedly increased significantly in the past year. Failing to find jobs in their hometowns in Turkmenistan, young people, both male and female, seek employment in visa-free Turkey. Detained by police, illegal migrants are deported and banned for five years. Once back in Turkmenistan, the deportees often look for illicit ways to delete the deportation stamp in their passport in order to find their way back to Turkey. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (SBU) The number of Turkmen citizens deported from Turkey has significantly increased in the past months. Reportedly, around ten to 30 deported Turkmen arrive daily on every flight from Istanbul. When Embassy political assistant returned from training last week via Istanbul, he observed some 25 passengers being stopped at the passport control by the Migration Service at the Ashgabat airport. A visa clerk at the Turkish Embassy in Ashgabat confirmed that the Turkish Embassy deals with deportation cases everyday. His colleague, who has been working at the Turkish Embassy for the past 15 years, claimed that, while previously the Turkish Embassy received only a few deportation telegrams, for the past two years they have been receiving long lists of Turkmen deportees every month.

¶4. (SBU) Economic hardships and lack of jobs in small cities and villages of Turkmenistan force many Turkmen young people to seek illegal employment abroad. Besides, cultural and language ties with Turkey, Turkmen citizens can travel to Turkey without a visa and stay for up to 30 days. These factors are the main reasons for the increasing flow of Turkmen "gastarbeiters" (the German word which is used in Turkmenistan for illegal migrants) to

Turkey, compared to other popular employment destinations like the UAE, Russia and the UK. Local contacts report that they have met a lot of Turkmen "gastarbeiters" when they travel to Turkey for business or vacation. One shared that, "Hanging around in Laleli (district in Istanbul), I came across a picture: six people were standing together and talking on pay phones -- and three of them were Turkmen."

15. (SBU) Usually, Turkmen "gastarbeiters" work in the tourism, construction, textile, leather and service sectors in Turkey. Women tend to work as caregivers for patients, children and the elderly. For the most part, they are forced to work for very low wages and sometimes even go unpaid. They tend to accept even the toughest working conditions as they wish to earn some money and return to their homeland as soon as possible. A local contact reported that his classmate had been working in Turkey for the past year as a babysitter for USD 500 per month. "This salary is too low for Istanbul, but her employers provide her food and shelter, which helped her to save her earnings and transfer 300 dollars every month to her family in Turkmenabad."

16. (SBU) Once deported, "gastarbeiters" get a stamp from the Turkish police in their passports. "The stamp does not allow the holder to cross the Turkish borders for the next five years," explained the visa clerk from the Turkish Embassy. Additionally, the deportees are fined approximately \$150 for every month of the visa violation. When they arrive in Ashgabat, following interrogation

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they receive another stamp from the Turkmen Migration Service, which prohibits them from leaving the country to any destination for one year. A lot of deportees, finding no job at home, look for the ways to get back to their "gastarbeiter" life. Some claim to pay \$1,000 bribes to "lose" and get a new Turkmen passport (usually with one letter changed in their last name), which helps them to travel back to Turkey.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: "Gastarbeiters" claim that more and more of their "colleagues" will be deported from Turkey as a lot of businesses lose jobs due to the financial crisis in Europe. An acquaintance of a local contact, deported last year from Turkey, gave his opinion that, "until the government would be able to provide jobs for people in provinces, the lines of deported citizens at the airport won't end." END COMMENT.

MILES